

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
PIER ENVIRONMENTAL AREA
EXPLORATORY GRANT PROGRAM
February 11, 2003

1. **Can I submit a proposal that seeks to develop a new technology?** The Public Interest Energy Research Environmental Area (PIER-EA) Exploratory Grant Program allows for the development of new software; however, it does not allow for the development or refinement of hardware technologies. For hardware technology proposals, please check the PIER website to find other areas that would be appropriate, for example: the Energy Innovations Small Grant (EISG) Program, the Environmentally Preferred Advanced Generation (EPAG) Program, and/or the Renewables Program.
2. **Who do we contact for guidance in determining if the grant program is right for us or if there is another PIER program that would be more appropriate for what we have in mind?** Send an email with your ideas to: explore@energy.state.ca.us The Program Administrator will try to answer your questions or direct you to the appropriate person at the California Energy Commission (CEC).
3. **Are pre-proposal abstracts accepted?** No. It is ok to email brief questions to the Program Administrator asking about a particular idea. The Program Administrator will not review anything more than a few lines concerning a proposal idea.
4. **What does “research restrictions” mean?** We use this term to indicate areas of research that are NOT eligible in the Exploratory Grant Program. For a list of these areas, see Part 1 and Appendix 3 of the Grant Application Manual.
5. **Some of the research restrictions are general. Where can we go for more detail?** Go to the CEC web site and look up the particular subject area that you are unsure of – if your question is not resolved by checking with the web site, contact the Program Administrator. **There are some gray areas in the restrictions listed in Appendix C. Where do applicants go for more information to determine if their idea is an appropriate area for research within the Exploratory Program?** As a general rule, we recommend avoiding proposing research in areas that could be considered “gray.” The Exploratory Program is specifically designed to explore new areas that are not under consideration. There may be research opportunities in the PIER-EA subject area outside of the Exploratory Program for your ideas that fall into a “gray area”. For more information, contact the Program Administrator and he will try to answer your questions. If necessary, he will contact the technical lead at the CEC and then get back to you. **If you have discussed your application with the Program Administrator, the response you received should be noted in your proposal.**
6. **The Global Climate Change (GCC) Program has several roadmaps – are they all restricted in the Exploratory Grant Program?** No, just the high-priority issues

from each of the roadmaps have been restricted. These are the issues that have been identified in the GCC integration chapter and are listed in Appendix C.

7. Small-scale field demonstrations are an example of the eligible types of projects in the Exploratory Grant Program. **What is the difference between a small-scale field demonstration and a technology feasibility study?** Small-scale field demonstrations refer to activities that validate non-hardware research hypotheses. For example, a sampling technique for measuring carbon sequestration in forests could be conducted on a small-forested area in Tahoe, before applying it to all of the forests in the Sierra Nevada. Technology feasibility studies typically focus on “proof of concept” research of innovative ideas to determine if they are technologically and economically feasible. For example, a feasibility study of the energy use and emissions of a control technology for small natural gas fired engines might be conducted before a large-scale demonstration project occurs.

This program will not fund the refinement of technologies. As noted in the first question, the CEC supports technology RD&D and feasibility studies of particular technologies, but not in this program.

8. **For certain projects, such as literature reviews, it is difficult to quantify benefits, what should the applicant do?** We understand that it is often difficult to quantify benefits associated with energy-related environmental research projects, please do your best. If you are unable to quantify benefits, do your best to provide a descriptive qualitative analysis of the benefits. **Please keep in mind that a literature review should have real-world applications and advance the current knowledge of a particular research issue.**
9. **Does the Exploratory Grant Program have a specific energy focus?** Yes, in addition to other objectives, all successful proposals must address an environmental issue connected to electricity generation, transmission, distribution, and/or use.
10. **Are the required forms considered part of the 10 page Appendices to the Narrative?** No. Forms A – E are not counted as part of the Appendices to the Narrative.
11. **Principal Investigators are only able to submit one application – are they allowed to be subcontractors on other applications?** Yes.
12. **Are there restrictions on the budget?** Yes – please refer to Form C – the proposed budget and narrative form for more information. If you have further questions, contact the Program Administrator.
13. **Is it possible to change the budget once the project is underway?** We understand that changes happen. If there are changes, you will need to discuss them with the Program Administrator. In certain cases, an amendment to the budget may need to be made. However, the total budget cannot exceed \$75,000.

- 14. What are the policies concerning Intellectual Property (IP) Rights – with respect to computer programs (coding) and applications that may be developed in the Exploratory Grant Program?** The IP will reside with the Principle Investigator; however, the State will retain certain user rights. For more information see Section 2.6 Intellectual Property Rights of the Grant Application Manual.
- 15. Can international people submit proposals?** Yes, international participants are eligible. Please note that international participants may pose challenges to the contracting process, and, as noted in Section 4.1 of the Grant Application Manual, “failure to agree to the terms, conditions and requirements of the grant agreement are grounds to cancel the award.”
- 16. Does the research work have to be conducted in California?** No, the research activities can be conducted outside of California. However, the applicant must show a STRONG link to environmental issues and research needs in California and indicate how the research products will be applied and how they will provide public benefits in California.
- 17. Will the Program Administrator provide feedback on all proposals that get rejected?** No, but if requested, the Program Administrator will give you a debriefing.
- 18. Can applicants contact reviewers, or vice versa?** No.
- 19. Can a deliverable be a model?** Yes; however, we also require deliverables in the form of reports (quarterly, final).
- 20. What is the Exploratory Grant program timeline?** We aim to notify applicants of approval by July 23rd 2003, earlier if possible. If there are no unexpected delays, it is possible that some of the awardees could have their grants in place and receive approval to get started by August 20th 2003. This is a new program and we do not know how many proposals to anticipate. We have come up with this schedule assuming approximately 30 proposals in areas where we have already identified appropriate technical reviewers. If there are less than that, we may be able to speed the process up, if there are more than that, it may take longer. These are target dates based on the initial screening, technical and programmatic evaluations, and internal CEC review and approval procedures.
- 21. Once a proposal has been approved, whom does the grant go through?** The California Institute for Energy Efficiency (CIEE), a part of the University of California Office of the President, will be conducting the contracting with the awardees. Their office is located in Oakland.

- 22. If the projects in the Exploratory Program are successful, is additional CEC funding guaranteed?** No. However, if a project is successful in the Exploratory Grant program, the likelihood that the project will receive additional funding in the future increases.
- 23. Will there be other solicitations in the PIER Environmental Area – especially in the “restricted areas”?** Yes, PIER-EA is planning future solicitations and they will be announced by the CEC. Visit PIER’s Funding Opportunities page at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/pier/funding.html>, or CEC’s Contracts page at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/contracts/>.
- 24. Will there be another solicitation through the Exploratory Grant Program?**
This is the first solicitation for the Exploratory Grant Program – it is a trial run. If this program is successful, then it is possible that there will be another solicitation.
- 25. Are copies of the Exploratory Grant Workshop PowerPoint presentations available?** Yes, contact the Exploratory Grant Program Administrator at (510) 486-6047 or Explore@energy.state.ca.us.